

CALDWELL COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
December 13, 2011

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Caldwell County Department of Social Services Board met on Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at the Health and Human Services Building, Third Floor Training Rooms in Lenoir, North Carolina. The Board Chair, Fran Fox, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Other Board members in attendance were Kaeti Groome, Shirley Kanode, and Rob Bratcher.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair called for approval of the agenda. Mr. Rob Bratcher made a motion the agenda to be approved as written. Ms. Shirley Kanode seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair then called for approval of the November 15, 2011 board minutes. Ms. Shirley Kanode made a motion the minutes be approved as written, seconded by Mr. Rob Bratcher. The minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. REPORTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Financial Report

Ms. Linda Laws, Business Manager presented the November 2011 County Finance Monthly Report stating that we expensed \$1,385,308.00, received \$980,621.00, and used \$404,688.00 in county dollars to operate during the month. Ms. Laws stated that the month of November is always typically higher due to the Emergency Assistance Program which has spent over \$77,000.00 in assistance to customers. Ms. Laws added that the months of December and January should be two of our best months. Ms. Laws stated that the demand for services is still extremely high. Ms. Jennifer Bowman, Program Administrator added that we currently have 221 children in Foster Care and that is the highest number we have ever had. The board thanked Ms. Laws for her report.

B. Personnel Report

Ms. Joyce Edwards, Director reported that we had no new vacancies since our last meeting with a total two vacancies currently. Ms. Edwards added that we have filled all of our economic services positions and are ready to make a job offer on one of the Social Worker III positions.

C. Foster Children's Christmas Party Update

Ms. Valerie Ackerman, Social Worker shared with the board an update on the Foster Children's Christmas Party. The party was held on Saturday, December 10, 2011 at the First Baptist Church in Lenoir. Ms. Anneal Ledbetter's Sunday School Class, DSS staff and Mr. Starnes and Mr. Wise from Wise Guys Pizza once again helped to make the event a success. Ms. Ackerman stated that there were over 300 people at the party and that the families and children truly loved it. Ms. Ackerman thanked everyone and expressed to the board how much their support is appreciated. The board members were all present at this year's event and had a wonderful time interacting with the families and the children. The board thanked Ms. Ackerman for a job well done.

D. Work Support Strategies

Mr. Will Wakefield, Program Administrator shared with the board the opportunities and challenges that the new Work Support Strategies Initiative could bring to our agency. Mr. Wakefield stated that in a word Work Support Strategies means change, and with that change; how do we process on a state and county level. Mr. Wakefield added that change brings challenges to all of us however; with that change opportunities for DSS are created to make things better for our staff and our citizens of Caldwell County. Mr. Wakefield presented a Power Point presentation regarding some of the components of the Work Support Strategies. Listed below are those key components:

Work Support Strategies (State Level)

- **Rising Caseloads (Continuous increases could result in breaking point for staff and resources)**
- **Decreased Funding (Loss of Funding or Cutbacks results in decrease in customer services)**
- **Efforts toward Innovation (Ideas and how can we do things better?)**
- **Technology (NCFAST & Imaging-Better uses of technology)**
- **Policy Simplification (Simplifying policies and strategies from the get go)**
- **Cultural Shifts (How do we view services such as online or offsite applications?)**
- **Healthcare Reform (Looking towards Medicaid increases in 2014 with newly eligible customers)**

Mr. Wakefield stated that there are nine states throughout the United States who are moving towards the Work Support Strategies Initiative. Mr. Wakefield stated that the definition of the initiative is that it provides our state with the opportunity to design, test and implement more effective streamlined and integrated approaches to delivering key support for low-income working families including health coverage, nutrition benefits and child care subsidies. Mr. Wakefield added that with the implementation of the NCFAST system and Work Support Strategies, multiple customer interviews with multiple caseworkers will be eliminated. Mr. Wakefield stated that the delivering system will be a more holistic story. The customer's story is told once, to one worker. Our goal as an agency is to create a model that works in a holistic manner. Mr. Wakefield added that the outcome of the initiative will be improved coordination amongst human services benefit programs; support integration and automation among program based systems and elimination of the silo approach to benefit delivery. Listed below are the key benefits of the model and what it means for our agency, and what are we doing now:

Key Tenets of the Model:

- **Tell Story Once**
- **There will be no wrong door to accessing benefits (Create different ways people can access programs and services.)**
- **Community Partners provide access to services**
- **State and Counties work together to make operational improvements**
- **Customer service and data will drive the development**
- **Retain Flexibility on how to implement**

What does this mean?

- **Team Work**
- **Flexibility-Staff will have to be more flexible and willing to learn new programs (New mindset)**
- **Rethinking what we do**
- **Learning New Skills-Staff retool and learn new skills**
- **A team or an individual's priorities may change overtime**

What are we doing now?

- **Moving to task management in some teams**
- **Team approach (One big caseload-Members of the team handle a certain task and the team works around the whole entire caseload)**
- **Developing an Imaging Plan (Maximizing efficiency in our processes)**
- **Giving staff an opportunity to recreate their work environment**
- **Seeking opportunities for the agency to be involved in piloting and creating new approaches**

Ms. Joyce Edwards, Director stated that the task model allows the worker to be responsible for the whole case. Mr. Will Wakefield, Program Administrator added that before when there was a job vacancy, a decision had to be made on whom or how the vacant caseload would be divided out until the position could be filled. With the new Work Support Strategies approach, everyone continues to work their tasks they are responsible for. Mr. Wakefield added that the approach does not lessen the work load but it compartmentalizes the work. Ms. Fran Fox asked if there is one contact person and Mr. Wakefield added that whatever question or problem the customer has will be routed to the call center where the issue or question will be resolved. Mr. Wakefield stated that this initiative is a much more customer service oriented approach in which the customer does not have to leave a phone message and wait for a response. The customer will be assisted immediately in a fast and efficient manner. Mr. Wakefield pointed out that this approach is less stressful to the customer as they do not have to try to remember their worker's name, leave repeated phone messages or be concerned should their worker leave the agency. Mr. Wakefield stated that the advantages to the worker are increased efficiency and accuracy as the worker can focus on a specific task and get the task completed. Mr. Wakefield added that our worker's have shown wonderful feedback, enthusiasm and excitement towards the initiative. Mr. Wakefield stated that tasks are routinely rotated so that all workers share in the process. Ms. Joyce Edwards, Director stated that with the workload so heavy, staff has done a great job getting on board with the initiative. Ms. Edwards added that one team has already gotten organized by creating a team bulletin board in their work room. Mr. Wakefield added that with NCFAST soon coming, we can go ahead and start some of the processes. Mr. Wakefield stated that our agency will be ready as initiatives come about and funding issues arise. Mr. Wakefield added that we can put all of the pieces together piece by piece. Ms. Kaeti Groome stated that it is commendable for the agency to be proactive. Mr. Rob Bratcher stated that with the less is more approach in the private sector, DSS is a people business and we change lives for the better or for the worse. Mr. Bratcher added that we are more than numbers, we are a people business. Mr. Wakefield added that our main focus is to be efficient and timely while focusing on customer service and providing quality for our citizens. Ms. Shirley Kanode added that focusing on families is the most important piece. The board thanked Mr. Wakefield and Ms. Edwards for their presentation.

V. Board Governance

- Next Board Meeting-Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 3:00 p.m. at the Health and Human Services Building, Third Floor Training Rooms.

VI. ADJOURN

With no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Shirley Kanode to adjourn seconded by Mr. Rob Bratcher. The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

Frances K. Fox, Board Chair

Joyce P. Edwards, Secretary

